

# HOW TO: USE WINDOWS EXPLORER

This instruction will detail some of the features of Windows Explorer (hereafter referred to as 'Explorer'). Explorer is a program which allows the user to look at the files and folders on their computer hard disk. Not to be confused with *Internet Explorer*.



The easiest way to start Windows Explorer is to use the key combination of WINKEY+E.

Explorer is also usually available from the toolbar next to the Start button in Win 7. The advantage of the WINKEY shortcut is that it allows you to quickly start as many 'windows'



of Explorer as you need for viewing, copying or moving files. One thing to remember is just to tap the 'E' because if you hold it down it will *repeat* and you will end up with many windows of Explorer open. (Not a disaster, just annoying)

## Useful Shortcut Keys

As well as the WINKEY+E mentioned in the previous paragraph the following key combinations are ones every Windows user should be familiar with:

- CTRL+A = Select All
- CTRL+C = Copy
- CTRL+V = Paste
- CTRL+X = Copy and Delete

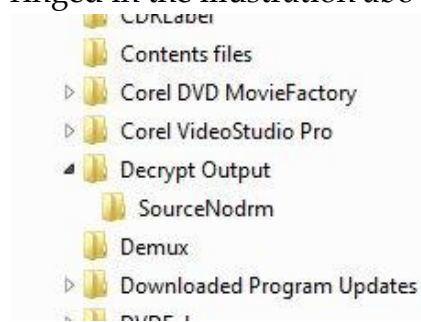
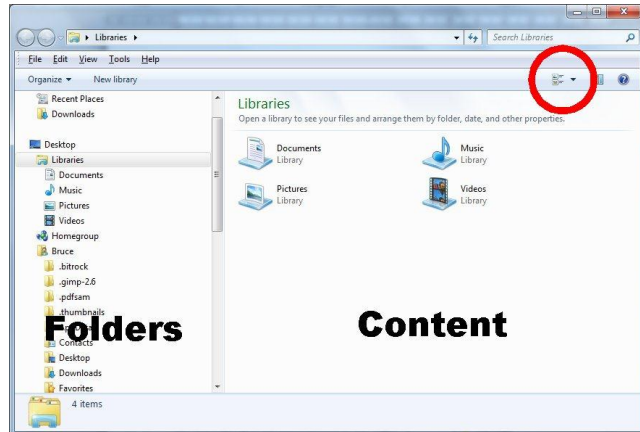
## What can Explorer do?

- Explorer can create Folders. This enables you to keep a track of all your files by keeping them in appropriate folders.
- Explorer can delete unwanted files or folders.
- Explorer can move or copy files to different locations on your hard drive or to external plug in USB devices.
- Explorer can has a powerful search engine built into it so those files you have mislaid can often be found quickly.
- Explorer can create short cuts.

## Explorer's Layout

When you first open Explorer there are usually two sections below the Menu and Toolbars. The left hand section shows only 'folders' as a vertical list. The right hand section shows the 'content' of the folder and can be both folders and files.

Whereas the left hand section is fixed the 'Content' can be displayed in a variety of ways. For example it can show everything as a list of names in several columns, a list with details such as file size and date of creation or a display of icons. You can choose which you prefer by clicking on the 'Change your View' icon - ringed in the illustration above.



Note the tiny triangles to the left of some of the folders in the left hand column (see illustration left). Notice that while several look like right pointing arrows one is now black and tilted slightly downwards.

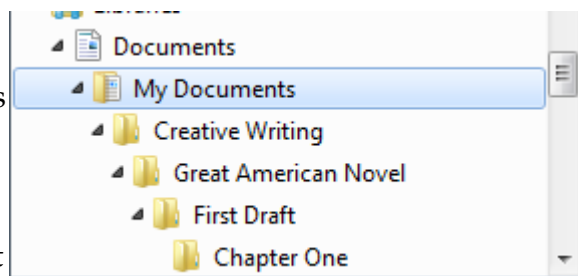
The right facing triangles indicate that the folder has subfolders, clicking on the triangle then displays the subfolder(s) and converts the triangle to the black tilted version. The subfolder is slightly offset to the right to show its location is within the folder above. Clicking on the black triangle hides the subfolder(s).

## What is the difference between 'Files' and 'Folders'?

Let's briefly dwell on the differences between files and folders.

'Files' are individual documents or pictures (or indeed, programs or parts of programs). For example this document is stored as an individual file created by the word processor. Where it is stored is my choice but often there are default folders (see next) maintained by the program itself.

'Folders' are containers in which files (or more folders – called subfolders) can be stored. You can create folders within folders as appropriate. The important thing is logic and simplicity and for most people the illustration on the right (from a Microsoft web site) is perhaps going a bit too far but it nicely illustrates the principle. Notice the black triangles showing that the subfolders are visible.



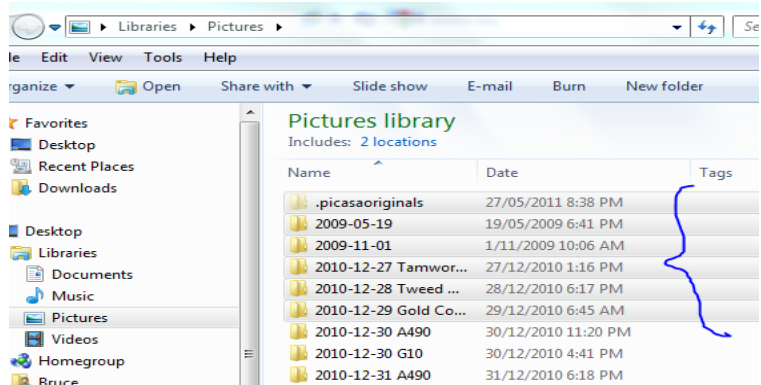
## How to 'Select' Files and Folders

You are probably aware of how to select individual files or even groups of files by left-clicking and dragging the cursor over them but Windows has some other built-in features which come in very handy when selecting several files or folders. Please note that in this exercise 'files' applies to folders as well.

To select many files at once:

- Select the first file by clicking on it.
- Move the cursor to the last file you wish to select and hold down the SHIFT key while clicking on this file.

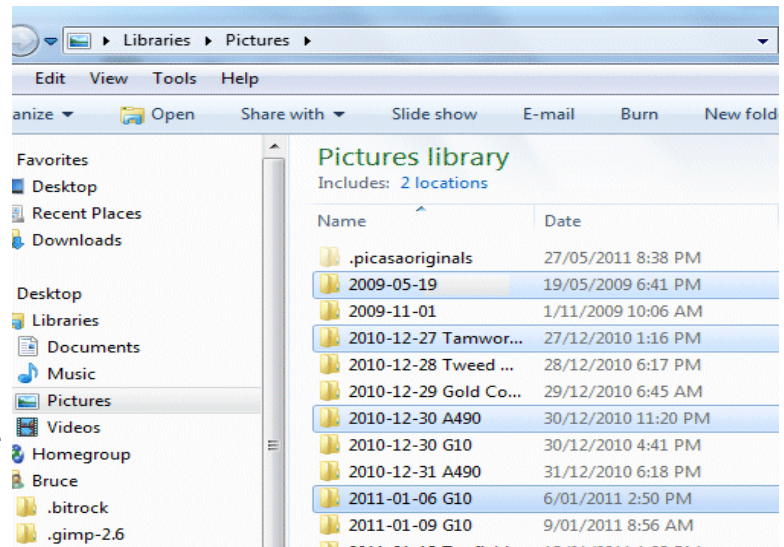
You will see that every file (or folder) between these two points has been selected as well (notice selected files are highlighted). How quick and easy was that?



But what if several non-concurrent files from a list need to be selected? That can be done as well:

### 1) Selecting several files at once

- Click on the first file as normal (this also clears any other selections – Can be important).
- When selecting the next file hold down the CTRL key.
- Repeat holding down the CTRL Key for other files to be selected.

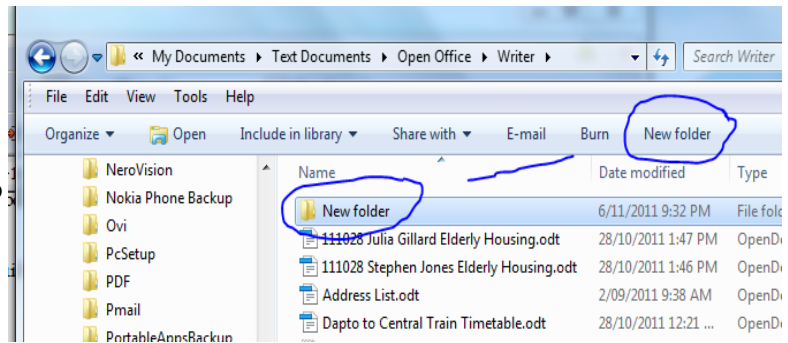


See how each file is added to those already selected but the files in between are not selected. As you can imagine this is very useful when deleting, copying or moving several files in one directory.

This method of using the CTRL key is a 'Toggle' so clicking the file again while holding down the CTRL KEY deselects a selected file. This can be useful for example if you wish to delete or copy the majority of files in a folder except one or two. Merely select them all by using CTRL +A (yes, that works for selecting files too) then, while holding down the CTRL Key, a left-click will deselect the files not required for the proposed action. Try it.

## Create Folders

In Windows 7 creating a new folder has been made even easier because it now has a heading of its own; merely go to the folder in which you wish to create a new one and click on 'New Folder'.



The name will be highlighted and you can enter a name of your own (as you can imagine a lot of folders called 'New Folder' are very confusing).

As in older versions of Explorer one can still right-click on a folder and select New>Folder from the resulting menu.



## Deleting Folders or Files

This is simply done by highlighting (selecting) the folders or files you wish to delete and pressing the Delete Key. As with all things Windows you can also right-click on the file and select 'Delete' from the resulting menu.

## Moving or Copying Folders or Files

Explorer has a default action if it is used to move files or folders from one place to another using the 'drag and drop' method.

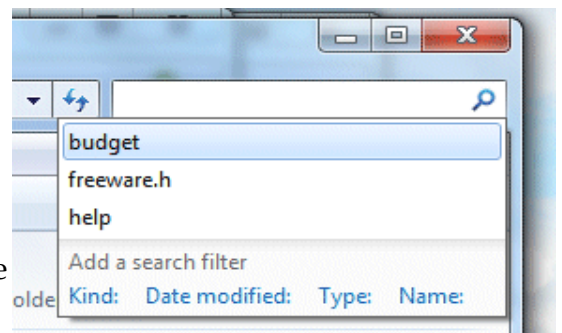
It will **move** the file/folder if it is being dragged to a different place on the same drive. The 'same drive' being one with the same letter i.e. C: or F: it could be a hard drive, a USB drive or memory stick.

If, however, the selected file/folder is being dragged to another drive e.g. from your hard drive to a memory stick then it will **create a copy** of the file on the target (to) drive whilst retaining the original on the source (from) drive. This means it will be necessary for you to delete the original file from the source drive if you only want the copy.

If, in the first case, you want to actually make a copy of the file/folder then holding down the CTRL key as you drag will make a second copy rather than just moving the file (watch the icon change to include a 'plus' sign as you drag and press the CTRL Key).

## Using the Search Engine

Simply type as much as you can remember about the file name or document contents into the search box at the top right of Explorer. The search will take place in the folders and sub folders as selected in the address bar above the menu or toolbar. You can Use Windows Explorer



add various filters to this search by clicking on the filters at the bottom of the drop down menu. Experiment yourself here - it is purely a search facility, it will not change anything on your hard drive,

## ***Creating Shortcuts***

Shortcut links can be easily created using the right-click. Simply right-click on a program, file or folder and drag to the desktop or folder where you wish to create the shortcut, drop it, then select 'Create Shortcut' from the menu that opens and give an appropriate title. It really is very simple; try it!

## ***Summing Up***

Windows Explorer is a powerful tool built into Windows; to master it you need to practice and remember a few shortcut keys. It is well worth making the effort because it makes moving or copying files and folders so very easy. It is a skill which enables you to (re)organise your hard drives in a way that suits you.

Finally - a reminder:

- CTRL+A = Select All
- CTRL+C = Copy
- CTRL+V = Paste
- CTRL+X = Copy and Delete
- Left-click - Does Something! Opens, selects, runs, moves etc.
- Right-click - Opens a menu; if you are not sure what to do next try right-clicking it may well tell what you need to know. This is also used to create a short cut (see text).

See also the '**How to Cut and Paste**' help file.